

RBC Heritage

Wednesday, April 13, 2016

Jason Day

Press Conference



JOHN BUSH: We'll get started. We'd like to welcome Jason Day into the interview room, he's making his fifth start at RBC Heritage. He's the first world No. 1 to play this event since Luke Donald in 2012. Welcome back to Hilton Head.

If we can get some comments on your week ahead.

JASON DAY: Yeah, it's good to be back here. I can't remember the last time I was here. What year was that?

JOHN BUSH: 2013.

JASON DAY: It's been a few years. But always good to come back. Obviously I think most people here know that my caddie and coach lived on the island for a bit. And it's kind of a hometown game for him.

We're going to have pretty tough conditions. I know that we're going to have very windy conditions as the week starts up here, starting tomorrow. And with the resurface of the greens, the greens are bouncing very hard, tough to keep the balls on the greens sometimes. So it should be a very interesting week scoring-wise.

Obviously it's always fun to come back to this place because we are just so used to long golf courses, where you have to hit driver all the time. And this golf course doesn't necessarily take a driver out of your hands, but it makes you hit pretty much where everyone else is hitting the golf ball. And from there it's positioning on the right side of the fairways and if you do that you get to the greens and hopefully make a par.

But with all that said and done, I'm excited about the week and I'm looking forward to a good start here.

JOHN BUSH: Before questions, just recap your week last week in Augusta. Never quite able to get over the hump, talk about that.

JASON DAY: For the most part the first three days, I actually didn't play that bad, overall. I hit it pretty decent. And my short game saved me out there.

But for the most part it was just really hard. If you're out of position at Augusta National, it's very difficult to get any sort of momentum. Yeah, I mean the last day was tough. It obviously wasn't the way I wanted to

finish the tournament. I just really couldn't get anything going on the last day. Obviously if you're not quite there from tee to green, giving yourself the opportunities on the greens, it's hard to get any sort of momentum.

And the changes in the leaderboard through the round, with what Jordan did on 12, it was a little frustrating, but for the most part it wasn't all disappointment. I actually played pretty decent. I'm happy with how the week went, but obviously I'm a little disappointed with not winning.

Q. Obviously if you play well, you win tournaments, the ranking will take care of itself. But how much does that No. 1 ranking mean to you?

JASON DAY: It's obviously huge being No. 1 in the world. Just thinking about it, I'm just trying to work and trying to get better each and every week. I know that like you said, winning takes care of everything else. The biggest thing for me is just trying to extend that gap between one and two, and if I can do that I'll stay ahead of the game. It would be a nice little week if I can get up here, obviously Jordan is not playing, and without myself adding tournaments it should help my World Ranking, as well.

But if you want to become a dominant player you have to be consistent, but you also have to consistently win. And showing that over the half of last year and early on this year, as well, but I want to make sure that I keep that level of play up. The only way to do that is make sure that I'm working hard off weeks when I'm not playing golf tournaments.

And it's a little hard to be able to do that this year, just because of the schedule. Scheduling is tough this year, the Olympics is throwing the tournaments around. And certain tournaments are in such time slots that you're not used to having them.

Right in the middle of my season now it's getting really busy. But I've got to be able to balance working in the off weeks, but also recover and then be able to go out and try and win tournaments. So it's difficult, but I think I can manage it pretty well.

Q. How is the back feeling? Second of all, how big a role does injury affect your play?

JASON DAY: This morning I was up at 5:00, tee times at 7:00. 5:00 I would wake up, get breakfast, after doing my normal warmup, just to get my body through the day. And then this afternoon I'll get physio done, soft tissue, so I'm constantly going in pretty much every day, just to make sure. Because if something gets tight in my body, my back, my thoracic, my hips, or even my hamstring or anything like that gets tight, it starts pulling on other muscles, and then obviously other things start tightening up, and that's when my back can go out.

It's a daily routine now, it's part of my life and I have to keep it that way because if I don't then you'll see me have a lot more withdrawals because of that. And I'm just trying to do whatever I can best, change my nutrition, change the way I train, change the way I go about my daily routine, just to extend the longevity of my career. If I can do that obviously keep myself in the game, but also become a lot fitter, stronger and faster then I'll hopefully keep up with the young kids that are coming up through the ranks in five to ten years from now.

Q. What's the difference, if I ask you, are there tournaments you could have won versus tournaments you should have won, what's the difference?

JASON DAY: As in --

Q. Like if you're in the hunt, you walk away saying I could have won that or I should have?

JASON DAY: Unless you're Tiger Woods and most people have blown more tournaments that they should have won. Early in my career I gave myself opportunities that I could have -- it's hard to say, because it's not like I've really had the lead -- I've had the lead before and kind of blown it, yes. But there are certain tournaments where I've gone through and been one, two, three shots off the lead and had the opportunity to win but just really didn't capitalize on the opportunities that I had on the golf course. But it's all a learning process. With whether you lose it with the lead or you don't, you lose it without -- not having the lead. It's all a matter of getting better. I think through my career, I feel like I consistently got better and better at it, and it's shown more so over the last year and a half with the wins that I've had, but also the consistency, as well.

Q. You have two world championship match play championships. Do you like match play better than stroke play?

JASON DAY: It's a good, fun format to play. It always feels like it's a Sunday match. There's a lot of stress involved in it and it really -- there's a lot of mental, as well, in that kind of format, because we're playing

seven rounds in five days. I told media last week that I wasn't sick that week, but I lost 11 pounds in that week, went from 190 pounds to 179 just because of the golf we play, and how much stress it puts us through.

And you really kind of learn, especially over the last 36 holes, I really learned, okay, you get to -- there's a breaking point in everyone's mental game where you get to a point where you can't push any more or do I feel like I can get through it and just coast in, and play. But every time I got to that breaking point I kept saying, no, get rid of that thought and keep pushing through.

Because in match play the good thing about match play is you can only lose a hole. And you never really are out of it unless you're playing terrible golf and way up early in the rounds. So if you can keep yourself -- keep grinding and keep grinding, and just kind of frustrate them through what you can do. For instance, I just wanted to frustrate people with my short game. If I miss the green I get up and down. If I hit the green I hole the putt. There's a lot of different strategies you can use. But I'll take a win. If I walk off -- if I've got a handful of match play championships, I'd take them just as much as short play.

Q. Can I get your reaction to Nick being named the captain again? By all accounts it was the players?

JASON DAY: Yeah, it was pretty unanimous amongst the players, even the Sunday dinner that we had everyone kind of got up and said we want him as captain again. We all respect him as a player, but also as a captain. He knows how to treat every individual, even though he's dealing with 12 different personalities and he has to try to mesh them together for a week and make us play the best golf we can together. And he seems to do that pretty well, even though we haven't won over the last two times with him, I think it might be a different story next year, but it's always great to have him as captain.

Q. Do you feel like last time you were closer?

JASON DAY: Yeah, definitely. He kind of -- him and a couple of other players spearheaded the change in points. And I think that helped a lot. We had a close match. I didn't play that great that week, so I didn't really help my teammates. But that's always frustrating when you come in as the best player and you don't help your teammates at all.

But, yeah, he's ahead of that and he's for the longevity of the Cup. That's what he wants, is he wants the Cup to some day turn into a Ryder Cup kind of I guess -- with history and tradition behind it, like we have in the Ryder Cup, for The Presidents Cup.

And I think that change in the point system definitely helps bridge that gap. It may not have changed, we

may just hit lightning in a bottle, but it certainly made it a lot more exciting last year, and I think it's made it a lot more exciting for the future.

Q. How do you blend preparing for the tournament and a Pro Am, especially on a day like today? You played with some of the RBC people, trying to make sure they have a good time?

JASON DAY: Yeah, it can be tough. Because you're out there making sure that those guys have a good day. And it's hard because I played with I think three guys who played off twenty-one today so it was like reading Braille on my scorecard (laughter.) I think they had a lot of fun.

Yeah, you kind of have to balance between going to fans and keeping the fans happy, also being able to talk to them and be personable with them and ask them questions about themselves and family and their business and stuff like that. But also try and play good golf and make sure that you focus and hit good shots as well. There's a bit of task in all of that.

But it's a good -- it's a good little practice round I get to play on, because we're going to have very small winds, northeast winds. You're playing the Wednesday before the tournament starts, which is great. And you get to see how the course is reacting. It's tough to manage but I'm very tired right now, after I a match like this. You go through the whole way trying to make everyone happy. You can't please everyone, but you do the best job you can.

Q. Can you run through what you did Sunday night and where you were and what you did Sunday night, Monday and Tuesday until you got down here?

JASON DAY: Yeah, so I was very tired Sunday night. Usually if I'm in contention at the tournament I don't sleep at all. Like if I'm around the lead, which I was, but I wasn't really in it the whole way Sunday, usually if Sunday rolls around and I'm in contention, I have a chance to win and I'm right there, Sunday night I get no sleep. I get about two hours of sleep because I'm so amped from what's going on that day. But I think it was just such a long ten days that I was there, that I was just so mentally, physically done, that I had a good sleep on Sunday.

We had a drive across at 12 o'clock, took us about three hours, I was in the bus, watched a movie. Came out and practiced for three and a half hours, and got out of here at like 8:00 at night.

Then the next morning, woke up at 5:30, went and played golf with some of the RBC guys at Wexford and played 18 holes over there.

And today woke up at 5:00 and played the Pro Am. And I'm going to do some practice after this, just on the putting green, and then get some physio and go home and try to rest up for the tournament. It's a bit of a long week but I'm trying to win the tournament, and that's what I'm focusing on right now.

JOHN BUSH: Jason Day, thank you, sir.

JASON DAY: Thanks.